

A new apologetics for our time
By Dinesh D'Souza

Editor: We're facing a new, more belligerent atheism today. Should apologetics be different also?

Dinesh D'Souza: In a way, yes. Every generation needs its own apologetics. The early Christians had to do it because once they moved outside of their immediate community, they encountered people from different religions: polytheists who worshipped many gods, animists who worshipped trees and rocks, even some outright atheists. They had to explain to these people why there is only one God, who Jesus was and what he did, and so on. The most prominent Christian apologist of the 20th century was C.S. Lewis. He addressed questions like, "Why would a just God allow the Holocaust?" Today, however, we face different challenges in the form of new issues and the new atheism, and that's why we need an apologetics for the 21st century.

Editor: Apart from the new atheism, what makes our situation different?

Dinesh D'Souza: We are living in secular culture. Many of us grew up in communities where Christian assumptions could be taken for granted. In America, for example, it could be assumed that people would endorse the Ten Commandments as a good moral code to live by. You didn't have to prove that; you could simply appeal to it. But today if someone asks you what you think about creation or life after death or gay marriage, you cannot just say, "Here's what it says in the Book of Leviticus." You will find that many people don't accept the authority of the Bible to decide such questions.

Editor: What's your strategy for combating the atheists' arguments?

Dinesh D'Souza: I fight them with their own weapon, which is the arsenal of reason and evidence. Many unbelievers seem to think that reason is entirely on their side. That's why they don't care that most people in the world don't agree with them; they think that eventually as knowledge spreads, everyone will become an atheist. I don't find their arguments very formidable, but contemporary atheists are sophisticated in surfing on the wave of current events and popularizing their ideals. They are getting through to our young people, and that's why many young Christians end up giving up the faith in which they were raised. It's very sad, and I think apologetics is an important way in which we can reverse this trend.

Editor: How effective is reason in these situations? It seems that often people are not open to being persuaded at all.

Dinesh D'Souza: It's certainly true that some people reject God and Christianity for reasons having nothing to do with truth. But in Western culture, we also have people who are "seekers." They are somewhat turned away from traditional religion. For instance, they won't accept life after death on the basis of what's written in the book of Revelation. On the other hand, they are certainly curious about what if anything comes after death,

and they will listen to evidence from near death experiences, from modern science, from studies of the brain, and so on. Apologetics cannot by itself bring these people to faith; but it can remove intellectual obstacles so that they are open to the experience of faith.

Editor: Regarding life after death, how do you go about examining this topic?

Dinesh D'Souza: I begin by showing that this crucial topic not only affects our ultimate destiny, but also affects the way we live now. If there is no life after death, we are like passengers on the *Titanic*. We can rearrange the deck chairs and turn up the music, but we are finally doomed: the ship is going down. But if there is life after death, then we can face death better, viewing it as a gateway to another life. We have a reason to hope for divine justice, in which good is finally rewarded and evil held accountable. We derive a sense of purpose and significance in life.

Editor: How common is belief in life after death?

Dinesh D'Souza: It has been affirmed in all cultures and all religions from the dawn of mankind. Outside the West, nearly everyone believes in life after death. In America, the number is around 75 percent. Only in some European countries and Japan does the figure go as low as 50 percent. So, the atheists who reject life after death are a minority.

Editor: How do you use that to your advantage in making your argument?

Dinesh D'Souza: If I were to ask a Christian, "Is there life after death?" he or she would say, "Of course there is." Now the atheist will ridicule this and say, "Come on. You haven't been to the other side of the curtain. You haven't interviewed any dead people. You don't *know* if there is life after death. You are only guessing. This is a faith-based position." And to some extent, the atheist is right.

But we can also turn the question around and ask the atheist, "Is there life after death?" The atheist replies, "Of course not." Then we say, "You haven't been to the other side either. You haven't interviewed any dead guys. So what information do you have that the believer doesn't have?" And the answer is: none. The atheist's rejection of life after death - like the believer's affirmation of it - is entirely based on faith. The real difference isn't that the atheist knows and the believer doesn't. The real difference is that the believer is honest enough to admit holding a faith-based position, while the atheist deludes himself into thinking that his position is based on evidence.

Editor: Give us a preview of the kind of evidence that you give for life after death in your book.

Dinesh D'Souza: I examine the testimony of thousands of people who have clinically died, whose hearts have stopped or whose brain shows no measured activity. They report that consciousness and experience continues even when bodily functions have ceased. I also show that modern physics and astronomy have shown how there can be realms beyond the universe, realms beyond space and time. Today the Christian idea of eternity

is in line with modern science. I discuss the findings of brain science to show that our immaterial side, our thoughts and feelings and consciousness and free will, cannot be reduced to the activity of the neurons in our brain.

Editor: How should pastors deal with the issue of apologetics?

Dinesh D'Souza: Some pastors love this stuff and spend time studying it. They are in a position to integrate reason and revelation in their sermons. But other pastors like to focus entirely on Scripture and revelation, and that's fine too. I think that pastors should recognize, however, that in today's culture, the church needs both. We don't want to concede reason and science to the unbelievers, because they will use that to seduce our children away from the faith. So if pastors don't want to do apologetics themselves, they should import it. They should bring in competent speakers. They should encourage apologetics study groups. Apologetics can equip Christians to go out confidently into secular culture and say not only "here's what I believe" but also "here's why I believe it."



Dinesh D'Souza is a former White House policy analyst and scholar at Stanford University. After writing several secular books on culture and politics, he has now become a leading Christian apologist. His 2007 book, [*What's So Great About Christianity*](#), is a refutation of the arguments of contemporary atheists. D'Souza's latest book, [*Life After Death: The Evidence*](#), provides rational support for the Christian perspective on the afterlife.

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Posted [Thu, Jan 7 2010 8:00 PM](#) by [MTBEditor](#)
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